

REMARKS

I. GENERAL

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's confirmation that claims 1-14, 34, 36 and 38-40 are allowed, and that claims 20-33 include allowable subject matter.

Claim 30 has been cancelled, without prejudice. Claims 15, 20-26, 31-33, 35 and 37 have been amended above. In particular, independent claims 15, 35 and 37 have been amended to include the subject matter of now-cancelled claim 29, which the Examiner indicated as including allowable subject matter. Claims 20, 22, 23, 26, 31 and 33 (which the Examiner indicated as including allowable subject matter) have been rewritten in independent form. Claims 24, 25 and 31 have been amended to address minor issues, and not for any reason relating to patentability. New claims 41 and 42 have been added to recite similar subject matter of rewritten claim 31. Accordingly, claims 1-29 and 31-42 are now under consideration in the present application. Provided above, please find a claim listing on separate sheets which indicates the status of the claims so as to comply with the requirements set forth in 37 C.F.R. § 1.121. It is respectfully asserted that no new matter has been added.

II. THE REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN

Claims 15-19, 35 and 37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,278,459 issued to Malzbender et al. (the

"Malzbender Patent"), in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,170,440 issued to Cox (the "Cox Patent"). Applicants respectfully disagree that the alleged combination of the Malzbender Patent and the Cox Patent teach or suggest the subject matter of previously pending claims 1-19, 35 and 37.

However, in order to expedite the prosecution of the present application and the issuance of a patent there from, independent claims 15, 35 and 37 have been amended to include the subject matter of now cancelled claim 30 (which the Examiner indicated as including allowable subject matter). Accordingly, this 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) rejection of independent claims 15, 35 and 37, and claims 16-19 which depend from claim 15 is now moot, and should therefore be withdrawn. Applicants reserve the right to prosecute claims 15-19, 34 and 36 in the form pending prior to the present amendment in this application, or any other continuing application.

III. ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants thank the Examiner for the confirmation that claims 1-14, 34, 36 and 38-40 are allowed, and that claims 20-33 are objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but would be allowed if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

As indicated above, independent claims 15, 35 and 37 have been amended to include the subject matter of now-cancelled claim 29, which the Examiner indicated as including allowable subject matter. Claims 20, 22, 23, 26, 31 and 33

(which the Examiner indicated includes allowable subject matter) have been rewritten in independent form. Claims 24, 25 and 31 have been amended to address minor issues, and not for any reason relating to patentability. New claims 41 and 42 have been added to recite similar subject matter of rewritten claim 31 (which was indicated as also including allowable subject matter).

IV. CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that pending claims 1-29 and 31-42 are in condition for allowance. Prompt reconsideration and allowance of the present application are therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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By: 

Gary Abelev
Reg. No. 40,479

Attorney(s) for Applicant(s)

DORSEY & WHITNEY L.L.P.
250 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10177
(212) 415-9200